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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 2924

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, NO, UN
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC: NORWAY'S NEW SECOND-IN-COMMAND AT THE UN

1. TOM ERIC VRAALSEN, A DYNAMIC, TOUGH-MINDED, 39 YEAR-OLD CAREER DIPLOMAT, HAS RECENTLY BEEN ASSIGNED AS COUNSELOR OF THE NORWEGIAN MISSION TO THE UN. FOR THE TWO YEARS IMMEDIATELY PRECEEDING HIS UN ASSIGNMENT, VRAALSEN SERVED AS CHIEF OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DIVISON WHERE HIS INFLUENCE ON NORWEGIAN POLICIES FAR EXCEEDED THE RANK OF HIS POSITION (ROUGHLY EQUIVALANT OF OFFICE DIRECTOR).

2. VRAALSEN HAS SERVED TWO TOURS IN PEKING AS WELL AS IN CAIRO, MANILA AND JAKARTA. IN PEKING, VRAALSEN WORKED FOR AMBASSADOR OLE ALGRAD, NORWAY'S PRESENT PERMREP AT THE UN. VRAALSEN WAS KNOWN TO BE AN ALGARDE PROTEGE AND THEIR WORKING RELATIONAHIP WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE EXTREMELY CLOSE.

3. SUBSTANTAIL PERSONAL CONTACT WITH VRAALSEN BY EMBASSY OFFICERS DURING HIS RECENT YEARS OF SERVICE IN OSLO IS THE BASIS FOR OUR UNANIMOUS CONCLUSION THAT HE IS MARKED FOR SENIOR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. WELL VERSED IN ASIAN, AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS, VRAALSEN'S OWN VIEWS COULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS PROGRESSIVE OR LEFT-LEANING AND VERY MUCH ATTUNED TO LABOR PARTY POLICIES. THIS MEANS HE IS PRE-DISPOSED TOWARD THE VIEWS OF THE LDC'S AND PRONE TO CRITICISM OF RECENT US POLICIES IN THAT SPHERE, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT
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TO INDOCHINA AND AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. HOWEVER THERE IS

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A CONSPICIOUS BUT CHARACTERISTIC ABSENCE OF CRITICISM FROM
VRAALSEN ABOUT THE FOREIGN POLICIES OR INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS
IN NORTH KOREA, NORTH VIETNAM, CUBA OR CHINA. HE HAS BEEN
EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE IN GALVANIZING "NORDIC" POSITIONS ON A
VARIETY OF UN ISSUES.

4. WITH REGARD TO NORWEGIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS, VRAALSEN IS
REPUTED TO BE A SUPPORTER OF THE CENTER PARTY, AN AGRARIAN BASED
POLITICAL PARTY WITH A STRONG SOCIALIST-OREINTED WING. THUS,
ANY POLITICAL AMBITIONS VRAALSEN MAY HARBOR WOULD NOT NECESSARILY
DEPEND UPON THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF THE NORWEGIAN LABOR PARTY.

5. PERSONALLY, VRAALSEN IS A SKILLED PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT, A
SOHPHISTICATED, ARTICULATE AND LOYAL REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS COUNTRY.
HE KNOWS NEW YORK AND THE UN WELL. IN THE PAST, VRAALSEN HAS
CRITICIZED HIMSELF FOR NOT SEEING MORE OF THE US DURING HIS
FREQUENT VISITS AND HE PLANS TO TRAVEL EXTENSIVELY, WORK LOAD
PERMITTING, DURING HIS PRESENT TOUR. BOTH VRAALSEN AND HIS
YOUNGER, ATTRACTIVE WIFE SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH. THEY HAVE
AT LEAST TWO CHILDREN WHO WILL ACCOMPANY THEM ON THIS ASSIGNMENT.

6. WITH VRAALSEN'S TRANSFER TO NEW YORK, THE NORWEGIAN UN
MISSION'S ALREADY SUBSTANTIAL INFLUENCE WILL BE STRENGTHENED
EVEN MORE. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AFFAIRS AT THE MINISTRY
WILL BE HEADED UP BY JAN NYHEIM, FORMERLY CHIEF OF THE ASIA,
AFRICA, LATIN AMERICAN DIVISION. ALTHOUGH HYHEIM IS A COMPETENT,
CONSCIENTIOUS OFFICER, WE DOUBT THAT HIS POLICY INPUT WILL
MATCH VRAALSEN'S. THE RESULT OF THE PERSONNEL SHIFT APPEARS
TO BE A COMMENSURATE SHIFT IN POLICY INFLUENCE FROM OSLO
TO NEW YORK - A FACT TO BE KEPT IN MIND IN CONNECTION WITH
ANY EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE NORWAY'S STAND ON SPECIFIC UN ISSUES.

BUCHANAN

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